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George Nicoll Nichols (1822-1905)

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GEORGE NICOLL NICHOLS
(1822-1905)

THIS PAPER IS DONE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR
HISTORICAL METHODS 300
DR. R. WARLICK

MARCH 1, 1983

PRESENTED BY:

RANDY HOUSTON

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. George Nicoll Nichols, a great printer, compositor, and slave owner, was born, November 12, 1822, in Chatham County, Georgia. He died at the lawful age of eighty-two at his residence, No, 17, 39th Street, East, April 13, 1905, Savannah, Georgia. During his life, the city of Savannah was facing many changes. The fires that engulfed many historic sections of the city, the Civil War that took the lives of many prestigious citizens, political changes, the Reconstruction, and the yellow fever epidemics of the 1850's and the 1870's were only a few events that reflected the changes in a city that grew from a population of 14,000 in 1850 to that of 54,000 at the beginning of the 20th century. His business interests were Real Estate, a Print, Binder, and Blank Book Manufacturer, Newspaper Publisher, and one of the founders and directors of the Citizen Mutual Loan Association, afterward, the Citizen's Bank. Mr. Nichols was also associated with several prominent clubs in the community which included the Board of Aldermen from 1869 to 1871 and again from 1883 to 1891. Mr. Nichols married Maria E. Nungezer in 1848 and together they had five children, two of whom were twin boys buried at White Bluff. Maria E. Nichols died in 1872 and Mr. Nichols remarried Mary Jane (Minnie) Mongin in 1873. They had three children. The Nichols descendants were and remained active members of the Savannah community in the fields of education, medicine, and civic organizations.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Genealogical Chart on the Family of George Nicoll Nichols.
2. The Will of Abraham Nichols, Chatham County Courthouse, Probate Court, Will NO. 24.
3. City Directory of 1888, (Savannah: The Morning News Print), Advertisement Page, 1888.

I. EARLY YEARS: 1822-1850

A. Family History

George Nicoll Nichols was the second born of three children of Captain Abraham and Ann Nungezer Nichols. George's mother, Ann (Nungezer) Nichols, was the daughter of George and Barbara Nungezer of England. Her family was granted a lot at Vernon-burgh, in White Bluff District of Chatham County (then Christ Church Parish), Georgia by the crown in 1759. George Nungezer Sr. was appointed a Road Commissioner for the White Bluff Road. He was commissioned Captain in the Georgia Militia, Chatham County in 1795. He also served as a member on the Chatham County Grand Jury in 1797, 1804, and 1812. In addition, he was a planter, and served as a Trustee of the White Bluff Congregation for a number of years.¹

Captain Abraham Nichols was a harbormaster and mariner of Savannah. He was a native of New Jersey, but settled in Savannah at an early age. He was one of the first port wardens of Savannah and a member of the first board of fire commissioners, and was a commander in a mosquito fleet boarded out in Savannah and Tybee Island during the War of 1812 to protect Savannah from an expected invasion by the British fleet. Abraham was born in 1771, and died February 6, 1829.² His will mentioned that he owned land in Georgia and New Jersey, and he had three children: Catherine Ann, Georgia Nicoll, and Edward Hartridge (Tattnall) Nichols.³

After his father's death, George and Edward were made wards of Commodore Josiah Tattnall of Bonaventure.⁴ There were no records found concerning the placement of George and Edward as wards of Commodore Tattnall; however, the Genealogical Chart of the Nichols family mentioned the fact that they were made wards. Also, there were no records found to indicate the whereabouts of the slaves of Abraham Nichols that were willed to George and his family. George became an Apprentice Printer at the age of ten.⁵ This was the beginning of what was later to become his first business in Savannah.

There was no literature which discussed the teenage and young adult years of his life until his marriage at the age of twenty-six. On May 9, 1848, George married his first cousin, Maria Emmaline (Nungezer). George and Maria were members of the Lutheran Church and were married by a Lutheran Minister, Rev. W. Aldrich.⁶ To this marriage five children were born; twin boys who died at birth were buried at White Bluff.

The 1860 Census for the City of Savannah showed the following entry:⁷

NICHOLS, George N.	Printer	37	Savannah
" Maria E.	Female	38 (Wife)	"
" Willie N.	Male	7 (Son)	"
" Fenwick T.	Male	3 (Son)	"
" Oliver S.	Male	1 (Son)	"

¹ Interview with Mr. Gordon B. Smith, 9203 Garland Drive, Savannah, Georgia 31406.

² Ibid.

B. Business and Community
Involvements

The first documented date for George N. Nichols's printing business was 1850, located on 1 & 2 Bull Street.⁸ In 1858, he moved the business to a new location on the Southwest corner of Drayton and Bay Street.⁹

During the Civil War, Mr. Nichols was a printer for the Confederate Government while occupying his own printing office at his home on Jones Street. He was later transferred to the quartermaster's department and served until the close of the war.¹⁰

For years Mr. Nichols identified with the city of Savannah. He was foremost in the benevolent work of caring for the sufferers during the yellow fever epidemics of 1854 and 1875, assisting largely in the efforts of the Savannah Benevolent Association, of which he was a member.¹¹

3 Chatham County, Georgia, Probate Court, Will No.24.

4 Savannah Morning News, Vol. 39., P.5, C.2, Obituary Section.

5 Ibid.

6 Chatham County, Georgia, Marriage Records, Vol. 1, Ref. 929.358.

7 1960 Census of Chatham Georgia, Vol. 1, p. 246.

8 City Directory for 1850, (Savannah: The Morning News Print,1850)

9 City Directory for 1858, (Savannah: The Morning News Print).

10 Savannah Morning News, Vol. 39., P.5, C.2, Obituary Section 1905

11 Ibid.

He was early connected with the Georgian and Proprietor of the Advertiser following the Civil War. There was no literature found to verify these statements; however, the Obituary Section in Savannah Morning News, p.5,c.2, 1905, mentioned the fact that Mr. Nichols was indeed the owner of the Advertiser until it suspended publication in the late 1960's or early 1970's.¹²

Mr. Nichols was a member of the Ancient Odd Fellows, and a life member of the Zerubbabel Lodge of Freemasons. He also participated in many offices of the Lutheran Church where he served for forty years.¹³

II. The Prosperous Years: 1870-1898

A. Family Life

During the Post Reconstruction Era, the life of George Nicoll Nichols began to take on new values and prosperity. In 1871, he purchased a lot of land from Henry Blun worth \$10,000 dollars for the security of Maria and his children.¹⁴ A couple months later, Maria E. Nichols died. The Chatham County Health Department's records showed the cause of death of Maria E. Nichols (age 41) was Consumption on July 21, 1872.¹⁵ She was buried at Laurel Grove Cemetery, Lot 345, in the Nungezer Vault, Savannah, Georgia.¹⁶

¹² Savannah Morning News, Vol. 39, p.5, c.2, Obituary Section.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Books, 4L-266.

¹⁵ Vital Records Card File for 1872; entry "Nichols, Maria E."

¹⁶ Laurel Grove Cemetery Records, Savannah, Georgia, Vol. 1, 1848.

Shortly after Maria's death, George Nicoll remarried on November 20, 1873 to Miss Mary Jane (Minnie) Mongin. They were married in the Lutheran Church by Rev. Timonthy Hardy.¹⁶ To this marriage three children were born.

The Census of Chatham County showed the following entry:¹⁷

Nichols, George N.	59	Printer	Savannah
"	Minnie J.	42	Female (wife) "
"	Oliver S.	22	Male (Son) "
"	Mongin B.	7	Female (Daughter) "
"	Edward M.	3	Male (Son) "
"	Minnie S.	1	Female (Daughter) "

Mr. Nichols printing manufacturer was for many years located on Bay Street just east of the Board of Trade Building. He was an honorary member of the Savannah Typographical Union.¹⁸ In 1884, he celebrated his fifth anniversary as a compositor in Savannah.¹⁹ In 1898, he retired from active business at 75 years of age.

During the outbreak of the Mexican-American War, Mr. Nichols volunteered for service, but the command was not ordered out to fight. He was also a member of the Phoenix Rifles Association in Savannah at the beginning of the Mexican War.²⁰

¹⁶ Chatham County, Georgia, Marriage Records. Vol. 1, Ref. 929.358.

¹⁷ The Chatham County Census of 1870; 1870 Population Census for the city of Savannah (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Record Service, General Services Administration, Microcopy 654, Roll 19).

¹⁸ City Directory for 1875, (Savannah: The Morning News Press, 1875).

¹⁹ Savannah Morning News, Vol. 39, p.5, c.2, Obituary Section.

²⁰ Ibid.

B. Business and Community Involvements

In 1870, Mr. Nichols was the owner of a Print, Binder and Blank Book Manufacturer located on 981 Bay Street.²¹ The 1872-1888 City Directories showed his Printing business at a new location on 93½ and 95 Bay Street.²² The 1888 Advertisement Page of the City Directory revealed the location of the Print manufacturer and the fact Mr. Nichols owned a telephone.²³ He was one of the first subscribers of a telephone in Savannah. The 1889-1901 City Directories showed again a new location of his Printing manufacturer at 115 Bay Street.²⁴

Mr. Nichols served as a member of the Board of Alderman again from 1883 to 1891.²⁵ He was at one time a member of the Legislature from Chatham County. In the secret orders, Mr. Nichols was a member of the Golden Rule Lodge of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows having been elected successfully Noble Grand and Grand Representative at Philadelphia in 1876.²⁶ Further community involvement of a non-business nature was Mr. Nichols's appointment to Director of the Citizen Mutual Bank Association, which later became the Citizen Bank in 1876.²⁷ He was also one of the founders of the Citizen Mutual Loan Association.

Mr. Nichols community involvements were instrumental because on the day of his burial the flag on the city hall was flying half-mast in respect to the memory of the former Alderman and Citizen.²⁸

²¹ Chatham County City Directory of 1870. (Savannah: The Morning News Print).

²² City Directory for 1872-1888, (Savannah: The Morning News Print)
Sholes City Directory for 1888, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News Print, 1888

C. Property Acquisitions

George Nicoll Nichols first documented property purchased occurred on February 10, 1871 -- a 56'6" X 131' lot number 44, on a porfion of ground lately in the South Common then called Forsyth Ward.²⁹ On June 28, 1871, he bought a lot number 21 Chatham Ward bounded north by Wayne Street -- east by lot number 20, south by Garden Street and West fronting on Chatham Square. This property was acquired by George Nicoll for Maria and his children.³⁰ On August 13, 1875, Mr. Nichols purchased a building from the Central Railroad and Banking Company on 93½ and 95 Bay Street for \$11,250.00 Dollars. This acquisition by Mr. Nichols was later known as Printer, Binder and Blank Book Manufacturer.³¹ The last peice of property acquisition by Mr. Nichols was in 1880 -- any lot of land on Tybee Island, numbers 59, 58, and 57. This proposition was the last will and testament of George's cousin, Mr. George P. Screven.³² In May 16, 1883, Mr. Nichols acquired the Bill of Sale of his Print & Blank Book Manufacturer from Central Railroad and Banking Company, Savannah.³³

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- 23 City Directory for 1888, (Savannah: The Morning News Print)
- 24 Sholes' City Directory for 1889-1901, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News Print, 1889-1901.
- 25 City Directory for 1883-1891, (Savannah: The Morning News Print)
- 26 Savannah Morning News, Vol.39, p.5, c.2, Obituary Section
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Books, 5B-139
- 30 Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Books, 4L-266

III. DESCENDANTS³⁴

Looking through the Genealogical Chart on the Nichols Family provided the living descendants names, and the City Directory provided the current whereabouts. I first telephoned Fenwick Tattnall Nichols III, MD. Although cordial, Mr. Nichols advised me that he knew very little about his Great Grandfather and referred me to his sister, Mrs. Sarah (Nichols) Pinckney. Mrs. Pinckney was very helpful in filling in the missing literature of the life of George Nicoll Nichols. She directed me to pursue various sources which enabled me to enhance my knowledge of one of the most prominent figures in Savannah's history.

- 31 Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Books, 4S-110.
- 32 Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Books, 6K-357.
- 33 Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Books, 5R-110.
- 34 Nichols, Fenwick T. III, MD, 5727 Sweetbriar Circle, Savannah, Ga
- 34 Pinckney, Sarah (Nichols), 104 Ventura Blvd., Savannah, Ga.

GENEALOGICAL CHART ON THE FAMILY OF GEORGE NICOLL NICHOLS*

Children of G.N. Nichols
by second wife,
Mary Jane (Minnie) Mongin

1. Mongin Baker Nichols
2. Edward McIntyre Nichols

M

Leone Hart

1. George Nicoll Nichols, II
2. Edward McIntyre Nichol, Jr.

3. Minnie Schley Nichols

GEORGE N. NICHOLS

B. Nov 12, 1822

D. Apr 13, 1905

M. May 9, 1848

Maria Emmaline NICHOLS

B. Jan 23, 1820

D. Jul 1, 1872

(first cousins)

1. William (Willie) Nichols

M

Elizabeth Baker (Niece of
Minnie Mongin)

1. Stephen Baker Nichols
2. Maria (Mary) E. Nichols
3. Caroline (Carrie) Baker Nichols
4. William N. Nichols, Jr.
5. George Nicoll Nichols (Miss)

2. UNNAMED TWIN BOYS BURIED
AT WHITE BLUFF

3. Oliver (Ollie) Sims Nichols

4. Fenwick Tattnall Nichols

M

Mary Edith Davis

1. *Fenwick T. Nichols, III, MD
2. Edith Thomas Nichols
3. Lillian Askew Nichols
4. *Sarah (Nichols) Pinckney

* This is not a complete representation of the Nichols descendants. Only those family members mentioned in this paper, or used as primary reference sources are listed above.

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1870 Census for the City of Savannah, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Record Service, General Services Administration, Microcopy 593, R. 141 (1934)

Georgian, 1 July 1841, p.3, c.3

Henderson, Lillian, Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia 1861-1865, 5 Volumes, Hapeville, Georgia; Longino and Porter, Inc., 1960

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Savannah, Georgia, Georgia Historical Society, City of Savannah Tax Book 1872

Savannah, Georgia, Georgia Historical Society, Emigration Records Card File

Savannah Morning News, Obituary Section, p.5, c.2, 1905

Nichols, Fenwick Tattnall III, MD., 5727 Sweetbriar Circle, Savannah, Georgia, 16 February 1983

Pinckney, Sarah (Nichols), 104 Ventura Blvd, Savannah, Georgia, 17 February 1983

Sholes' City Directory for 1850, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News Print, 1850

Sholes' City Directory for 1858, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News Print, 1858

Sholes' City Directory for 1860, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News Print, 1860

Sholes' City Directory for 1870, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News Print, 1870

Sholes' City Directory for 1888, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News
Print, 1888

Sholes' City Directory for 1900, Savannah, Georgia: The Morning News
Print, 1900

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Haven, Conn.: Research Publications, Inc., Rolls 1 and 2